

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Joe Sestak (D-PA) issued a statement on the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, which President Bush signed into law after receiving overwhelming bipartisan support in the Congress. — “During my campaign last year, I promised to make accountability and ethics a top priority and enact stronger ethics and lobbying requirements. The signing of comprehensive lobbying and ethics reform legislation represents our promise to fight for the interests of the American people, instead of special interest lobbyists,” said Congressman Joe Sestak.

However, while that the passage of this new legislation represents an important step towards comprehensive ethics and lobbying reform, Congressman Sestak maintains that the new law did not go far enough and that he will continue to work for an independent ethics commission.

“Having served for 31 years in the Navy, I have been largely shaped by my background in the military, where rules were extraordinarily stringent on gifts, trips, and contractors’ relationships with us. I would expect such rules to be the same for Members of Congress – or even higher,” said Congressman Sestak. “This commission would have the power to investigate alleged violations by Members and employees of the House of Representatives, and present a case of probable ethics violations to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Additionally, this commission would make recommendations on violations to the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct to report to the appropriate Federal or State authorities.”

New Lobbying and Campaign Contribution Provisions

The Honest Leadership, Open Government Act includes new transparency provisions for lobbyists bundling campaign contributions. For the first time, reporting will be required for lobbyists who “bundle,” or collect campaign checks for Members of Congress, and requires Members of Congress to report if a lobbyist bundled more than \$15,000 in campaign contributions semiannually for that Member.

The law will also increase disclosure of lobbyists’ contributions to lawmakers and entities controlled by lawmakers, including contributions to Members’ charities, to events or entities honoring members, contributions intended to pay the cost of a meeting or a retreat, and contributions to Presidential library funds.

Strengthens Ethics Rules and Public Disclosure of Lobbying and Member Expenses

In addition, the Honest Leadership, Open Government Act prohibits Members of Congress from attending national political convention parties held in their honor and paid for by lobbyists or their clients, and prohibits Members of Congress and their staff from attempting to influence private sector hiring and firing in exchange for access.

The law doubles the frequency of the disclosure of Lobbyists’ Reports to four times a year and establishes an online, searchable public database of lobbyist information. The Act also requires lobbyists to disclose past executive branch and Congressional employment, prohibits lobbyists from giving gifts and travel in violation of House and Senate rules, and increases criminal and civil penalties for violating the Lobby Disclosure Act to \$200,000 and five years in prison, and

expands public disclosure of Members' travel and finances.

Ends Conflicts of Interests on Post-Congressional Employment

The new law requires Members to disclose job negotiations for post-Congressional employment. It also strengthens the revolving door, banning former Senators from lobbying their colleagues for two years after leaving their Congressional positions, and prohibits Congressional staff from having official contact with the Members' lobbyist spouse on behalf of the spouse's client.

Denies Benefits to Members Convicted of Corruption

The Honest Leadership, Open Government Act will deny taxpayer-funded pension benefits to Members of Congress convicted of corruption while serving the American people.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress